THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY

J. K. MOZLEY, B.D.

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BY THE

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PREFACE

THIS little book owes something, in idea and form, to advice obtained in a conversation with the late Professor Gwatkin. I was thereby led to look for a connection between Christian doctrine, its view of God and of man, and the facts of history, and to see in history the working of Christian principles. This is not to claim the support of so great and honoured a Cambridge name as his for any particular treatment or special statement which may be found in the book. Those who knew Professor Gwatkin at all in his life, and were more than students of his books, will realise the pleasure there is in paying any tribute, in however small a matter, to his memory.

J. K. M.

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INTRODUCTION

"Not on the vulgar mass
Called work must sentence pass,
Things done which met the eye and had their price"—

So do we read in one of Robert Browning's noblest poems, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*; and this is true, not only of the life of an individual, but of a nation, a church or a movement. No scales are known to man in which he may nicely balance good and evil. The demand for quick returns assessable at a glance is no less absurd in some great moral or intellectual, than in some great commercial, undertaking. Christ compared the Kingdom of God to leaven; in a sense, everything of great and far-reaching importance is like leaven: it works secretly, and you must wait till the leaven has done the whole of its work before you can pass a final judgment upon it. It is not till a thing is finished that you can really know whether it was worth beginning. And that kind of finality is not to be found, at least not in connection with something far greater and more complex than the like of this or that person, with, for instance, a theory of politics or economics, a philosophy or a religion; even of an individual life a final judgment is much less possible than is often supposed, and that not only of the great disputed characters of history like Julius Cæsar, or Mary Queen of Scots, or William

Laud, but of the ordinary man-in-the-street or your next-door neighbour. There is indeed a sense in which a final judgment can be passed upon some great political or religious movement, and not upon a person. A movement can, many movements have, come to a dead stop ; a particular view of the world, of conditions in the world, of men in the world, can collapse altogether ; you can say of it that it is not only dead but damned ; of the men you can only say that they are dead.

But while a movement is still moving it is impossible to say for certain what will be the end of it, or whether it will have any end at all. If you happen to approve of the movement and want to walk along with it, you must walk by faith and not by sight. Its end is metaphorically round the corner or beyond the furthest peak that you can see ; and you won't be here long enough to get round that corner. Yet, though you cannot see its end and cannot therefore say the last word about it, you can see its ends ; you can know what it professes to do, what it has done and does. Your grandchildren may have valuable lessons to give you (which you will never learn), but if you want to be taught, if only to judge of the value of the teaching, there are your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice.

Now in this little work I begin by assuming that Christianity is a movement which is still moving. If any reader denies this I advise him to stop at this point. Not being an archæologist, I could not promise him the proper archæological interest in a mere survival from the past. And if his own eyes and wits have played him false, and he mistakes life for death, no words, no apologetic of mine could convince him of his error. On the other hand, I invite the further

attention of any reader who merely thinks Christianity "discredited." In practice this often means that books, newspapers or other people, have left upon his mind the impression that a number of very learned men do not believe in the Christian Religion, and that weighty objections can be brought against it. But he does not always remember that a number of very learned men do believe in it, and that an objection may beg the question, as, for instance, when miracles are tacitly, if not openly, assumed to be impossible. The extent to which, in the popular anti-Christian attitude (in so far as it is a thing of the people at all) assumption takes the place of argument, is a remarkable and insufficiently recognised fact.

Christianity is still moving. For nearly two thousand years that movement has been the most powerful single force in the world. But as its movement, its dynamic force, may continue for another two hundred thousand, it is as well to make allowance in thought for that which is to come. The believer and the unbeliever ought each to realize this. The believer cannot say: "Christianity has done such good things for the world that its divine origin is manifest," for he can never eliminate the possibility of the answer: "But what of the bad things that it will do from to-morrow onwards till it is slain by an outraged world?" Similarly, if the unbeliever should charge the Christian Church with having made Hell of the earth, it would be ridiculous of him not to anticipate the reply, possibly true, "But if you are alive next Monday you will see that it has made Heaven of it; and anyway your great-grandchildren will see it, and their great-grandchildren also." Christianity, up to the present, has always been in the position of having another chance. If the Athenians had been wise and just, they would neither have put

Socrates to death, as his accusers thought right, nor have made him the first and most famous Old Age Pensioner, as he thought right. They would have given him another chance, and watched what he made of it. We cannot watch what she makes of it, but we ought to remember that the Church has still another chance—and another after that.

So if you are looking for an apologetic in the record of the achievements of Christianity you will obtain a very imperfect apologetic, because you are dealing with a very incomplete record. Moreover, the record which we have got is far too complex to allow, even within its limits, of the immediate emergence of an apologia for the Christian faith. The whole of western civilization, the lives of western men, are, since the time of Constantine the Great, who died A.D. 337, inextricably mixed up with Christianity. And we must face the consequences. Philanthropic writers like Mr. C. L. Brace, author of *Gesta Christi*, made great play with the recital of the historical reforms due to Christianity, and they certainly look well on paper. But I can imagine this particular work failing to impress very deeply a casual reader, as it failed to do so with myself. Firstly, it is over-lavish in ascribing to Christianity improvements and humanities which any unbeliever in Christianity, who at the same time confessed himself a believer in progress (whether there is any philosophical justification for this latter belief is a separate question), could easily attribute to the tendency of the human heart to improve. Secondly, the sharp divergence sometimes drawn between the Christian spirit and the Christian Church may be held to lead to the conclusion that the Christian spirit is only a specialized representation of the universal spirit of kindness and

benevolence, while the Christian Church, which is too definite and concrete a fact to be resolved into anything except itself, must shoulder the burdens of religious intolerance, the Inquisition, the religious wars, and, in fact, all the things done by Christians which appear specially scandalous. The result of all this might very well be to impress the casual reader with the desirability of remaining on terms of the merest nodding acquaintance with an institution of such chequered morals as the Christian Church; and of meaning by Christianity the kindly spirit with which Mr. Pickwick beamed through his glasses upon the world, and, it may be granted, something also of the heroic spirit in which that celebrity was resolved that wrongs should be righted. The same idea lurks in the minds of those critics of the Church who conceive of Quakers and conscientious abstainers from war as the only real Christians, whereas the most that can be said is that such abstention does justice to one side of the Gospels, and to the practice of some, perhaps many, of the early Christians. In brief, it may be urged that if Christianity is only another name for kindness it is better to use the shorter word; if it means a number of things besides, the Church at once becomes necessary, if only as giving the right atmosphere in which these things can be appreciated. Indifference to the Christian Church in the interests of a vague Christian spirit is of no use to-day. Its prevalence would mean the disappearance of Christianity altogether, except as an additional title for goodness, because Christ was a good man.

The achievements of Christianity, as we see them portrayed in the pages of Mr. Brace and of other writers, are often real achievements of that religion. It was in

virtue of the faith of Christ, and of that alone, that the position of women was bettered, and respect for women increased, in the later Roman Empire and in the dark ages that followed, that the exposition of children was fiercely combated, and that slavery was practically extinct in Europe by the fourteenth century. It was due to this faith that a public conscience was created in connection with the character of sports and of theatrical performances, that some of the worst abuses of war were abated, while the graces of chivalry did something to lighten the horrors of the battlefield. The sad estate of Christ's poor stirred men not only to sentimentalize over them but to help them, whence in Mr. Lecky's words, "Christianity for the first time made charity a rudimentary virtue." The torch of learning was kept alight amid the darkness which deepened over Europe when the mightiest civilization the world had yet known, the civilization of republican and imperial Rome, went down before the tramplings of the barbarians. Persons who deny that in these cases and many others we can point to a real nexus of cause and effect, are as perverse as if they were to deny the connection between the writing of the books of the New Testament and the belief in the Resurrection of Jesus, or between the Italian art of the Middle Ages and the doctrine of the Incarnation. Nor is it fair to undermine the legitimate claims of Christianity at such points as these by the argument that Christianity was only the apparent or accidental cause, since such results were sure to be attained somehow, if not through the inspiration of Christianity, then through some other inspiration. Such an argument cannot be disproved; what it suggests is quite possible; something else might have taken the place of Christianity and produced

similar consequences; but in point of fact the credit does belong to Christianity in the historical connection of events.

Nevertheless, the achievements of Christianity go deeper than any reforms, however worthy of attention. More important than any number of individual improvements in civilization is the fact that it has provided a civilization; and more radical than that civilization, because the root of it, is the religion itself, with its particular teaching about God and man, and about the relations between God and man. To a consideration of these major points we may now turn.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

The Religious Achievement

Professor Henry Sidgwick has pointed out somewhere that the people who try very hard to get for themselves the greatest possible amount of happiness are not generally successful. This is a queer fact, if, as some learned persons have taught, happiness is the only possible object of action, so that when we say that a thing is good or bad we really mean that it tends to produce greater or less happiness. One would imagine that if this were so the best thing any one could do would be to study how to pile up in his own life and for his own personal enjoyment the greater amount of positive pleasure, while carefully avoiding everything painful. There is no possible reason that I can see why he should so act as to bring about, not the greater happiness for himself, but "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," to use the phrase which summed up the teaching of the once famous philosophy which I have in mind. After all, questions about the greatest happiness of the greatest number

are extremely difficult, as any one can see for himself by a short study of the Insurance Act controversy of a few years ago. Able and well-meaning statesmen on both sides contradicted one another with great precision as to whether the game was worth the candle, whether ninepence in the bush was likely or not to give more satisfaction than fourpence in the hand; while the people most intimately concerned were more or less blank on the whole matter. But where my happiness or your happiness is concerned the road ought to be plainer. If, for instance, you enjoy social work, if it pleases you to devote your time to helping other people, running boys' clubs, or the like, then it is quite natural that you should do so, but I may have no inclination whatever to do the same, I may find it tedious and uncongenial, and prefer to fill up my time in other ways, and on the happiness-the-only-criterion-basis who is to judge between us? On that basis, if my pleasures are low there is neither point nor common honesty in calling them low: the only question is whether they are pleasures. The old Greek philosopher, Epicurus, taught the doctrine that happiness was the only thing worth aiming at, and I have keen recollections of the care with which it was pointed out to me that happiness for Epicurus was a lofty, intellectual kind of pleasure, not at all the pleasures of the pot-house. But this is all beside the point. If Epicurus really believed this doctrine, there is no more reason why he should have been ashamed of long dinners and strong wine, if these things appealed to him and his digestion could stand them, than of walking about his garden and discoursing on the way in which the world was made of atoms. Pleasures are of every kind, and it is simply an attempt to get the best of both

worlds, to be both a consistent pleasure-seeker and a stern moraliser, when pleasure-lover sits in judgment upon pleasure-lover, because he dislikes the other man's pleasures.

But it is quite true that the hunt for pleasure is not a satisfactory hunt. Not only would it lead to the extinction of the race, if certain pleasures and refusals of pain became universal (which is not in itself in any way a condemnation of the hunt, for it is doubtful whether the thorough-going pleasure-lover obtains the slightest satisfaction from contemplating the existence of other pleasure-lovers long after he is dead, and no longer able to join in the hunt), but, which is really to the point, pleasure-seekers, taking them as a class, are not specially happy. The *carpe diem*, enjoy the day, creed ends on a sigh rather than on an Amen. The search for pleasure has often been a mark of brilliant societies—of ancient Athens, of Renaissance Italy, of modern West-end London. We hear of the pleasure-loving Greeks; doubtless they did love pleasure, but the popular, everyday poetry which they have bequeathed to us moderns is more likely to make you cry than most things in literature. Read the selections from the Greek Anthology in Professor Mackail's translation, and draw near to the pathos of that ancient pagan world. The Renaissance, in so far as it was or came to be definitely anti-Christian in its ideals, was a reversion to the pagan type, and one has only to note its lack of staying-power to doubt whether the inward satisfaction that it gave was at all equal to its surface-fascination: it was unsatisfying as a glorious summer's day which ends in violent thunderstorms. And in our times it is surely significant that the war has made people rush to do things as remote as possible from

their previous life of pleasure-seeking. This is neither a new craze, nor necessarily a sudden virtuous elevation of life and thought; there is more to be said for the belief that the former concentration on pleasure, on "having a good time," had become horribly boring.

These reflections are not out of place in considering the religious achievement of Christianity. What is the relation, the practical rather than the theoretical relation, between religion and happiness? To a large number of people, even to a large number of modern conventional Christians, there is no relation, or they are even thought of as varying in inverse proportion. That joy is one of the fruits of the spirit, that happiness should be the companion of faith, that worship should make us glad, would be thoughts of little meaning to many of those who attend our churches, Now in the Roman Empire, at the time when Christ was born, both these questions, religion and happiness, were pressing, and some people at least saw that there ought to be some connection between them. But how was it to be done; how were men to be at once religious and happy? Various answers were given. The practical one of the man-in-the-street was to perform the duties of religion, to give the gods their due (this according to Cicero *was* religion) and to look out for happiness in other ways, an attitude encouraged by the State authorities, who wished the right thing to be done by Heaven, and peace and contentment to prevail as far as possible on earth. Hence the free bread-tickets and the public games, satirised by Juvenal. The results for the life of the average men of the time have been variously judged. There has been a reaction from the picture drawn by Matthew Arnold, how:

" On that hard pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell—"

and there has been a tendency to insist on the amount of solid personal worth and quiet domestic happiness to be found in the Empire, especially in the provinces, which were less corrupt than Rome. This may be true, and yet it does not affect the general impression that during the Empire the struggle against pessimism was continually acute, and that neither the ruling classes nor the average citizen escaped it. To alleviate it, the official religion, whether the worship of the old gods of Rome or the cult of the Emperor, was useless. But there were other possibilities of an association of happiness with religion. There was the way of the Stoic philosophers, of the slave Epictetus, and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. But Stoicism, perhaps because it was no more truly a religion than modern determinism, which it resembles, is a religion, in whatever it succeeded did not succeed in making people happy. It was a dignified creed, serviceable to a man with no illusions (as he would say) about the quality of his earthly environment, and no illusions that he would ever have another one. Mr. Arnold Bennett has said that he never travels without Epictetus in his bag. There are occasions when he would be in place—but I wouldn't take him on a holiday. Stoicism was, and is, no good to the average man; and the average man of the Empire who wanted happiness, but knew that happiness is not to be got by looking for it, but only by looking for something else in which it may be, turned from Stoicism to the various religious cults, " mystery-cults," or " mystery-religions," as

they are generally called, which were to be found all over the then known world. Especially popular were the cults of the Egyptian deities Isis and Serapis, and, later, of the Persian Mithra. These mystery-religions promised to those who by solemn and holy rites were initiated into them redemption from sin, communion with divine existences, and, in Dr. Samuel Dill's words, "a blessed promise for the life to come." The pomp and grandeur of the ceremonies performed by their priests and votaries was an additional attraction. Undoubtedly the mysteries re-created hope and happiness on a large scale; and yet one wonders that their effect was not greater. For nearly half a century from the year 193 onwards they had all the support of imperial favour. Why did not one of them, or a combination of them all, anticipate Christianity as the new authoritative religion of the Empire? Why was not the problem of religion and human happiness solved, once and for all, in, for instance, the worship of Mithra?

I suggest that there were weaknesses, radical weaknesses, in the cults themselves, and that the answer is to be found in the discovery of the central weakness. Like many cults of the present day they were altogether too introspective, subjective, and, as the current catchword goes, psychological. What was important in the mysteries was not Isis or Serapis or Mithra, but the hopes, expectations, longings, cares—in short, the "attitude" of the worshipper. The mysteries were a projection of the worshipper's wishes: he was living on himself, or rather on that part of himself which was interested, with whatever intensity of degree, in religion, and looked for religious satisfaction, religious happiness. The death of Osiris, the mourning of Isis, the contest of Mithra with the bull, the fertilizing

power of the slain bull's blood—these things were not valued as facts but as symbols. Now the exact place of symbolism in religion is not easy to determine, but symbolism is part of religion and not the whole. The mysteries altogether exaggerated the symbolical element, which is not without its lesson and warning for the present day.

At the same time that Stoicism was impressing a few select souls, and the Mysteries were gathering in wistful or enthusiastic adherents, the leaven of Christianity was beginning to work. It agreed with the Stoics in refusing to make pleasure the end of life, and with the Mysteries in holding out hopes and claiming to satisfy needs. But its differences from both were more striking. In the first place it invaded the world as a religion of historical facts. Stoicism had nothing to tell about religious facts at all, for one cannot speak of religious facts in connection with a determined order of events going round and round in a circle, which was the Stoic philosophy of history ; and the facts told of in the Mysteries were not facts so much as illustrations. But Christianity did insist upon facts, historical religious facts, as historical as anything done by man, as religious as anything done by God. Then, secondly, though Christianity was concerned, very much concerned, for the individual, it was not like the concern of Stoicism and the Mysteries. Both of these systems realized very thoroughly the weaknesses and needs of men, and set themselves to meet them, though Stoicism never expected to appeal to more than a select minority. Both promised satisfaction to their disciples ; in the Mysteries real happiness was attained. Now, Christianity had its promises to make ; but the most impressive thing about it, during the centuries when it was struggling for toleration,

was not the grandeur of those promises. No one, not even its philosophical opponent Celsus, who really knew something of it, went about saying, "Christianity is too good to be true"; on the contrary, the common feeling was that it was an outrageous thing that so dreary, degrading and altogether contemptible a creed as this one should be allowed to exist. And even when, in the third century, the common people had begun to take a common-sense view of it and assure themselves that Christianity could not really be as black as it was painted, philosophers refused to take a philosophical view of it. The phrase, "The Gospel and Human Needs"[1] has been taken as the title of a most suggestive and stimulating book, and it is true, as we shall see, that the Gospel did meet human needs; but the very strong impression left by the preachers and upholders of the Gospel in those ages was that the Gospel was true and that human needs must adapt themselves to that fact.

The third difference brings us to the heart of the religious achievement of Christianity. Christianity showed that the problem of religion and the problem of happiness was one problem, and that it was solvable on religious lines. The old paganism had made of one problem two: Stoicism had looked for a unity but had done no justice to the religious elements: the Mysteries had come nearer the truth, but had not been strong enough to grasp it: Christianity, which, to the glance of the passer-by, must have appeared singularly unlikely to make anything of this problem at all, solved it. For Christianity brought back real religion to the Roman Empire, and it brought back, not as a different thing but as the same thing, happiness as well. And the

[1] By J. N. Figgis (Longmans, Green & Co.).

happiness took what we might call an extreme form: it was not only happiness, but joy.

There is something paradoxical about this, for there is a good deal on the face of it to be said for the view that Christianity in its sacred writings, doctrines, and commands makes next to no promises of happiness in this life, but has a great deal to tell of suffering, affliction and persecution. And all that it told, all that its Founder had foretold about such things, came entirely true. Good men and bad men made superlative efforts to destroy the Christian Church. The Acts of the Martyrs are proof of the suffering: they are also proof of the joy. The Martyrs were joyful, not as men who are anticipating joys to come and can therefore stand the present unpleasantness: they were joyful as you or I might be joyful after a day in the country. And this brings me to notice the unmeaning objection, or reservation, or whatever it may be, that is sometimes made when people speak of the joys of the martyrs or of Christians generally as "spiritual joys"—for all the world as though "spiritual" joy ("Christian" joy, it is sometimes called) were of a different genus from ordinary joy. Joy is a certain temper of the spirit; it may arise from a variety of causes; it may express itself in different ways; but it is a lamentable thing that anyone should suppose, and that any Christian should —as is sometimes the case—countenance the idea, that to call a Christian happy is really to convey no information at all about him owing to the different quality of Christian happiness. When any one asks whether special sources of joy are not open to the Christian he is on different ground, and the answer is quite simply "yes," though even here care is needed lest the Christian should be thought of as sundered

from those sources of joy which, when sin is not of their essence, are free to men as men. Christian teaching may at times have had a Manichæan flavour, but the Church has never been in any doubt that Manichæanism—the sharp, philosophical and ethical separation of matter and spirit—is an abominable heresy.

The great source of Christian happiness is not within a man but outside a man. The introspective character of an ancient philosophy like Stoicism, or of much modern thought, is not Christian at all. Human nature may remain fairly constant, but men vary from hour to hour. The much-praised maxim, "Know thyself," which the Roman poet Juvenal said came down from heaven, did not come down from the Christian heaven. Christianity has always laid stress, not on a man's knowledge of himself, but on his knowledge of what is not himself, things which do not change though he changes. As the Christian Church rests on facts which it proclaims as real facts, whether men believe them or not, and on truths which it asserts to be truths quite apart from the attitude of men towards them, it offers to the world a universal religion, and not a religion possible only for select souls and particular temperaments, for the East but not for the West, or for the West but not for the East. All the people who want to dissolve the creed into symbolism, or to say that facts do not matter, or that a doctrine is true in relation to one age or one person but not to another, are busy undermining the universality of the Christian religion, and bringing us back to the time when a man's religion was the reflex of his own temperament or need, when a man was an Epicurean because he was an optimist (on a limited scale), or a Cynic because he was a pessimist (on an unlimited one), or a Stoic because he was a

natural aristocrat, or a votary of one of the Mystery-Religions because he liked mystery, and wanted a religion and not a philosophy. But the Christian Church keeps on saying: "These things happened": "These truths are true": they are important, not because they will make you happy or answer to your needs, but because nothing you can do or feel can make them other than they are. The Church has never said that you may believe anything because you like it any more than it has said that you may do anything because you like it. Happiness is not the end of belief, just as it is not the end of action. But those who have believed have been happy, and have found their needs met.

It is because of this positive dogmatic side of Christianity that Christians are not weighed down by the problem of suffering, and even in the fact of suffering remember joy. The Christian, like any other man, may have speculative difficulties about suffering, and may find answers to them in text-books of apologetics. But his best answer is simply his Christianity, his faith, which though it may not fully unlock to him the secret of suffering, has unlocked to him the secret of joy. The worst evil of suffering is not itself but the doubts it gives rise to. That is the peculiar poignancy of the book of Job. The Christian answer to doubt at one point is faith at another. The sufferings of the Cross are set over against the sufferings of the world, and Calvary becomes the source not only of endurance but of happiness and exaltation.

When the common people heard Christ teach, they turned to one another and asked, "What is this? a new teaching!" And Christianity, for all its two thousand years' history, is still a new teaching. It

has never lost the element of surprise. The Church is still a stranger in the world, though the Church has a power, absolutely unique, of making people at home in the world. They are at home in the world because they could be at home anywhere, supposing Christianity to be true.

Christianity's great religious achievement is itself. There is no special achievement in Buddhism. If the pessimistic view of life be taken, man must make the best religion that he can out of it. Islam in its greatest days, and in bursts of enthusiasm still, was fiery and fanatical. It appealed, if not to man's noblest qualities, at least to very real qualities in man. And to-day it is no achievement at all to invent a new religion: anyone can do it if he does not mind the worshippers being rather select. But Christianity is a real achievement: you never could say, you never can say, who may not be the next convert to it. You can never say what precisely it is that has been the decisive factor in a conversion. One man is impressed by the authority of the Church, another, by the humility of Christians; one man is struck by the coherence of Christian doctrine, another, by the mystery (or simplicity) of Christian worship. One wants a religion that can help him in ordinary life; another, a religion in which he may find refuge from ordinary life. One sees in the Incarnation the crowning of earthly life; another in the Atonement the curing of earthly ills. The Gospel picture of our Lord itself attracts some for this reason, some for that. To attempt to catalogue Christianity as a religion of one type or another is doomed to failure: types of religion jostle one another in it, and no pigeon-hole could receive it. And yet with all this, those who love it are struck by nothing more than by its homogeneity,

its unity with itself through all its many aspects. Such is Christianity still, when modern revisions of it and efforts to make it up to date have not shorn it of something of its glory, or threatened its very life. It has done what it has done for men because itself is not from men but from heaven.

CHAPTER II

Political and Social Influence, with a Consideration of Certain Objections

Christianity came into the world at a time when ancient pagan civilization had reached its zenith in the early Roman Empire. The civilization of Athens had been more brilliant, of republican Rome more compact and of higher moral value, but for completeness of range and power, for governmental thoroughness, for a reconciliation of the needs of a central authority, and of wide latitude in respect of home rule, imperial Rome was an advance on anything that had preceded it. And that the unity might even extend to the things of the spirit, the worship of the Emperor was superimposed upon the various religions and cults of the time. Everything was done that could be done in the way of organization to ensure the stability of the great imperial fabric.

Yet the fabric was doomed to crack. It was strong, but not strong enough. The State was everything; the individual, little or nothing. But disregard of the individual means in the long run the decay of the State, unless there is some force strong enough to make the individual sacrifice himself to the State, to curb his own appetites, and spend himself in honest and useful work for the good of others. No such force existed.

Religion, where it existed in any reality, was too individualistic to affect the life of society. And the State was weakened by its own self-complacency. There was no vision of something to be worked towards, some fairer social ideal, some healing process whereby the evils of Society might be overcome, and that which was lacking filled up. And all the time the clouds from out of the north and the east were coming nearer and growing blacker. Inexorable was the approach of the day when the flood of barbarism was to sweep over the face of existing civilization, and destroy what it could not rebuild.

Now, Christianity failed to save the Roman Empire, that is, it failed to make it strong enough to resist that avalanche that was to break upon it. But this was inevitably the case. For more than two and a half centuries Christianity was a religion in continual danger of persecution, fighting for its own life, despised and hated, never in a position to remedy those social evils whose removal was essential if the Empire was to be saved. Social or political prominence was extremely difficult for a Christian owing to the risk he ran of being entangled in idolatrous practices. If we were to take the apologist Tertullian—he wrote about the year 200—seriously, there was hardly a profession or trade which a Christian could enter. What the Christian Church could do during these centuries was, in the face of organized persecution, to bear repeated and magnificent witness to its beliefs, and to impress its own members with new moral, spiritual and social ideals, that in the dark ages which were to come, there might be forces strong enough to counteract and to tame the savagery of the northern invaders, and to build up on the ruins of the old a new and more vital civilization.

At the accession of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, to complete dominion in 321, the heathen population of the Empire may still have been nineteen-twentieths of the whole; it was certainly in an overwhelming preponderance. It is utterly unreasonable to demand that the Christian Church, entering upon such a heritage under such conditions, should have saved the Empire from Goths, Vandals and Huns. All that could be saved lived on in the Church. Yet it is worth noting that even so imperfectly Christianized an Empire as that of Constantine actually revealed the working of Christian leaven on the statute book. The position of slaves was made more tolerable, and freedom was more easily won. The bloodthirsty gladiatorial shows were not abolished in the west till 404, when the monk Telemachus leapt into the arena and sacrificed his own life, but Constantine temporarily repressed them in 325, and as the Church had continually denounced them, it is not improbable that he was actuated in part at least by Christian principles. The position of women began to improve, and a stand to be made against laxity in marriage and the prevalence of divorce. The legislation of Justinian (A.D. 528) gives far greater and more important evidence of the workings of the Christian spirit.

But the fight which the Church, now at last freed from the menace of persecution, had to make against the new danger from the barbarians, far outweighs in importance, and in claim upon the gratitude of posterity, all particular pieces of legislation. The Western Empire fell in 476. From that time till 800, when Charlemagne was crowned in Rome as Emperor of the Romans, invasion after invasion swept over Europe. Goths, Vandals, Franks, Huns, Lombards, and finally

the followers of Muhammad, brought fire and sword on rich plains and noble cities. Against them all, the Church stood forth as the one representative of a higher and a civilized ideal. She subdued, she taught, she Christianized. Even those who insist on mistaking obvious truths for paradoxes must allow that Mr. Chesterton is putting the matter exactly as it should be put when he says that Christianity "was the one path across the dark ages that was not dark." The Church stood for all those great principles which can be so easily swept aside in times of confusion and ignorance, when sheer brute force and the tyranny of uncontrolled desires are enthroned in men's hearts—for the principles of authority and responsibility, for justice and order, for reverence for the things of God, come what might of the things of Cæsar. And in her monasteries there was leisure for learning, and a refuge for many a weary soul.

It is during these centuries that upon the Church seemed most clearly to have descended the heritage which in Virgil's *Æneid* is foreseen and bestowed upon Rome:

> "But, Rome, 'tis thine alone with awful sway
> To rule mankind, and make the world obey."

And before men hurry to criticize the relevance of this ideal to the true ideals of the Church, and to point to the spirit of Christ's words, "My Kingdom is not of this world," they should stop to think whether any other way was open to the Church than the way she took. The Church was a coherent and unifying force; the only real one. That force overflowed into channels of politics and law; if it ruled with a rod of iron at times, it ruled to educate and build up. Of course, if

it is assumed that Christianity should be debarred by its principles from exercising any formative influence upon the progress of civilization, that it is in effect a kind of divine anarchism, of which one would have to add, "the world is not worthy," then the very fact that the Church in the early Middle Ages worked hard at very intractable raw material, to give it form and utility, cannot be a matter for any praise whatever. But the assumption is at best a matter of a few texts, and the whole method of attack at this point is one which raises a storm of protest whenever a Christian uses it in self-defence.

The reforms of Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) in the eleventh century were the prelude to the ages of the Church's greatest power. The Church which had done so much to build up nations remained stronger than the nations and their rulers. And when we are referred to the scandals of mediæval Catholic civilization, both in Church and State, we must remember (it is always true) that while we are sure to hear of the scandals we are not at all sure to hear, and we shall not hear with equal fullness, the other side. Or the other side comes to one mainly in its superhuman manifestations, the divine humility of St. Francis, the royal sanctity of St. Louis of France. But ordinary, quiet Christian goodness is not chronicled. Chance indications alone show whether it does not form the background of the picture whose centre is given up to every form of horror. There was colossal wickedness in the Middle Ages, and for our eyes what there was of simple goodness was hidden away behind it. But these were the ages which not only produced the distinctively Christian genius of such men as Dominic and Francis, Dante and Thomas Aquinas, Leonardo da Vinci and Fra Angelico, but also

saw Christian humanitarian endeavour and Christian political philosophy coming in their different ways to the help of the common people. The many institutions, such as hospitals and orphanages, which arose, spoke of the increased emphasis on the value of human life; the gradual abolition of slavery, of the sacredness of the individual. The monks may not always have cared for poor men wisely, but at least they cared for them. Even in respect of war, the Church, though it cannot be said that its influence tended to discourage it, humanized the methods of warfare and created the ideal of chivalry. And whereas in the early Middle Ages the weight of Church influence was thrown on the side of the authority of rulers, that by all means order might prevail even at the cost of liberty, during the later period it acted rather as a check upon absolutist doctrines. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas could write: "A king who is unfaithful to his duty forfeits his claim to obedience. It is not rebellion to depose him, for he is himself a rebel whom the nation has a right to put down." Marsiglio of Padua, the great philosophical champion of popular rights in the Middle Ages, is not more outspoken.

But it may be asked, were not such apparently liberal and democratic utterances as that just quoted due to a desire to exalt the power of the Church, more precisely of the Papacy, rather than to champion the cause of popular rights? The former motive certainly cannot be ruled out, but one must also remember that throughout these times there was no force strong enough to restrain the passions of princes except the might of the Papacy. Nor does the fact that there were wicked Popes, and that abuses and corruptions fastened like parasitic growth upon the Christianity of these times

do away with the fact that the Papacy itself stood for the reality and primacy of spiritual, as contrasted with purely material, claims, and that mediæval religion contained within itself the possibilities of its own reform. The Church was never without the knowledge of what Christianity was and what it involved, though that knowledge seems at times deep-buried under aspects of faith and worship which, if not wholly alien to the true genius of the Christian religion, were at least elevated to positions to which they had no claim, and which entailed the dispossession of greater and more vital things. A reforming movement may itself be corrupted. The monasteries were of the nature of a reform, so was the coming of the friars, and both were overtaken by grave evils. Yet the presence of the reforming spirit, again and again manifest before the sixteenth century, differentiates mediæval Christianity distinctively from a culture displaying slow but inexorable decadence.

The mediæval world passed into the modern, and the old almost unchallenged supremacy of the spiritual power disappeared. Yet modern civilization is in debt to Christianity at every point. However deplorable has been the bitterness between Christians, resulting from the great break of the sixteenth century, the zeal with which the sundered portions of Christendom have contended for the Christian ideal, as they have understood it, has meant that, in the building up of modern Europe, other than purely material considerations have been continually present. The challenge which the Protestant Reformers delivered, not only to certain religious doctrines, but to the fabric of life built up from the bottom after the fall of the old Roman Empire, was intended to reveal the constructive and

health-giving side of the Gospel ideal in connection with the ordinary relationships of human life. That is the secret of Luther's contrast boldly drawn between the piety of the home or the city and that of the monastery or hermitage. But what might have come of this new application of Christianity, as now conceived, to human life must remain a matter of guesswork, since the Reformers were unable to secure such a hold on the civilization of their day as the old Church had possessed, and still in many countries, owing to its energetic counter-Reformation, retained. It is true that Calvin set on foot in Geneva a system which for its thoroughness and inclusiveness rivalled the authority of Rome, that Knox made this system a new home in Scotland, and that in England the Puritans had for a short time the power to impose their will and discipline upon the nation. But in Germany, the home of the Reformation, no equally great ideal for Society prevailed, and generally it may be said that Protestantism as a positive force became too much implicated with the right of private judgment as one of its own supposed corner-stones (though the original Reformers had a quite different view of the matter) for its social possibilities to be fully realized. Accordingly, the function of Protestant Christianity has been to insist on the importance and uniqueness of each individual soul, to inculcate a set of theological doctrines, to diffuse a spirit of rational morality, and, here and there, to inspire certain of its adherents with a passion for social reformation. The Church as a theocracy has been obscured, and the past development of European civilization under ecclesiastical influence is regarded as a page in history now turned for good and all.

Now, when we turn to look at modern European society, the difficulty of saying what has been or is due to unquestionably Christian influences becomes almost insuperable. For some of the keenest and bitterest opponents of Christianity have been in large and detailed agreement with just that kind of programme which to many Christians is the natural outcome of the Incarnation. And however true it may be that conventional Christianity is often timid, faithless and unloving in respect of any definitely Christian influence upon social life, it is also true that there has been more leavening of the lump than could have been expected, more highly proper uneasiness invading the consciences of Christians, and awakening their minds to a doubt whether the creed they profess can be used simply as one most powerful force on the side of existing privileges. In persons and movements deliberately antagonistic to Christianity, so far as Christianity means a Church and a Creed, there is to be found a very great deal of teaching and aspiration with which, to the extent of the feelings involved, all Christians could and should sympathize, while many would go further and work for the promotion of the same measures, and for a similar reconstitution of society. The French Revolution, to which the whole modern democratic movement goes back as its starting point, was much more superficially than essentially anti-Christian and anti-religious. And modern humanitarianism, in its least credal and ecclesiastical forms, is often anxious to claim a real union of spirit with primitive Christianity, and to cherish real though detached parts of the Christian ideal. At the same time it must be frankly admitted that organized Christianity in Europe has on many occasions and in many great issues shown itself hesitating and nerveless,

with too much consideration for the past and too little attention to the future.

This last fact implies that the Christian Church has not taken proper advantage of the Christian atmosphere, which is still the atmosphere of modern Europe, to press forward in the strength of its own ethical ideals to the task of the rebuilding of society. And yet the fact, though lamentable, is not at all inexplicable. Modern political and social life is conditioned by the general and increasing tendency to exalt the democratic principle above all other principles of government. But the Christian Church did not grow up, nor did it come to its height of power, under a democratic State. We have seen that its great mediæval theologian denied explicitly the autocratic theory which gives to the monarch unchallengeable power; nevertheless democracy, as we understand it, was impossible in the Middle Ages, and indeed for long after the Middle Ages had passed away. But after the French Revolution, throughout the nineteenth century, the advance of democracy was swift; men concentrated upon its promotion as they will concentrate on the promotion of a new religion; for many of them democracy was a new religion, and while they were certain that it had the promise of the life that now is, they cared little as to what had the promise of the life that is to come. No situation could be imagined less easy for the Christian Church to deal with. Past associations made it sympathetically inclined to the old order; the democratic movement had the faults of youth—an aggressive self-assurance, lack of consideration for experience built up on other lines, and a certain narrowness of outlook, natural enough, since its opponents were much narrower, but still not calculated to conciliate or to ease inevitable suspicions.

For the Church as a whole, the eighteenth century had been a period of rest, if not of slumber, and when the crash of revolution came, there was small likelihood of the Church supplying guidance or even counsel to those who were in a hurry to break down the existing pillars of society that they might build up a new framework (new, but for Rousseau at least, with the newness of the very old, long forgotten and now rediscovered) for the life of men. Modern democracy and the Church started therefore with faults on both sides, and with a large measure of unavoidable misfortune, as opponents mutually distrustful and disapproving.

The suspicion and the disapproval have by no means wholly vanished; on the continent, at least before the war, democracy that had reached the point of Socialism was hostile both to the Church and to the whole religious conception of the world implied in Christianity. In England the hostility has never been so thorough. But what I would urge here is that, despite the historical facts of the fear which the Church entertained lest democracy should work towards the erection of an atheistic State, and the contempt felt on the other side for the Church as a merely reactionary institution (a contempt in which was present another feeling, that the Church was untrue to its own professions and ideals in not espousing the rights of the people) the democratic movement owes more to Christianity than would be admitted or welcomed by enthusiastic Christians unfriendly to democracy, or by enthusiastic democrats unfriendly to Christianity.

What has Christianity given to the furtherance of the hopes of this most powerful of modern movements? In the first place it has directly contributed to the abolition of certain wrongs and abuses, and to the

maturing of certain reforms. Nor can we write this contribution off as though it were a mere expression of charitable and philanthropic feeling, and not directly impelled by the principles of the Gospel. The abolition of the slave-trade was carried through in England as the result of the persistent agitation of men like Wilberforce and Clarkson, who based their efforts on all that they had gathered from the New Testament of the equality of all men in the sight of God. The exaltation of spirit which ran through the Northern States in the great American civil war was Christian, and the result of Christian pleading for the cause of the enslaved negro. The Factory Acts in England, which Lord Shaftesbury succeeded in forcing on to the statute book, did not proceed from the political economy of the time, which was indeed far too individualistic to approve of such restrictions, but from the conscience of a man inspired, as St. Francis had been inspired, with Christ's love of the poor and afflicted, and free from the delusion that because Christianity does not profess to teach political science, it can therefore stand aloof from politics and never hope to fulfil its aims through political measures. Education, up to within living memory, owed almost everything to Christian effort; no one can fairly deny the right which the Church of England has to the gratitude of the people in this connection. It is easy to find faults with the work of a pioneer, especially when the work has been raised to a higher scientific level, but the glory of being a pioneer in work of inestimable value is permanent. And in this connection may be mentioned the work for education done by F. D. Maurice and the group of men, "Christian Socialists," who gathered round him, in forming working-men's colleges and inspiring the "Settlement" movement which has

had so good an effect in our great cities. And if the great social evils of impurity, with the degradation of woman that it involves, intemperance and gambling be considered, the attacks upon them have come with greater persistence and success from the inspiration of Christian ideals, of the Christian teaching of the image of God in man, than from any political and economic sources. Christianity, it may be said, has not achieved its objects: these evils still remain; but the uprooting of evils so strongly entrenched, so subtly linked up with instincts natural to man and unwholesome in their corruption alone, is not the work of any brief number of years.

Christianity has played its part in the work of legislation; but though Christian men, following out the precepts of the Gospel, have often been in the forefront of the fight for measures aiming at the provision of a more spacious life for humanity, other men and other forces have also joined in the struggle and helped towards the end in view. So we must look, secondly, at the still more important and distinctive share of Christianity in affecting the character of the atmosphere in which progress towards a better state of things has been possible. The influence of Christianity in this connection has been very great, and has been expounded by Mr. Benjamin Kidd in his earlier book *Social Evolution*. Christianity has undermined the possibility of the powerful and the wealthy classes setting up a really successful resistance to the pressure continually being exercised by those who desire a larger share in the benefits of civilization, and a social development in the interests of the many as opposed to the few. From a strictly intellectual standpoint there is no reason why it should be regarded as an obvious truth

that the political future lies with democracy, that government will tend more and more to promote the social interests of the mass of the people rather than of elect persons or classes, and that no effective resistance to this general social and political trend will be possible or indeed attempted. A social evolution which shall make for the well-being, in the future more than in the present, of the whole of society is to be ensured only by the sense of the subordination of the desires of individuals and classes to the welfare of the whole. But how to secure this? How to ensure that those who are conscious of the possession of privileges and powers unshared in by the many, of the possibilities of prolonged resistance based on the entrenchments built up before them by the usages of past time, of personal interests lying in the exploitation and not in the service of others, shall make, reluctantly perhaps, but with a sense of the necessity of so doing, concession after concession which must have the effect of progressively undermining their own position? And more widely still; how to induce society as a whole, at a particular time, to think less of immediate advantages and satisfactions than of the character of social life in the future, a life in which the present has no share?

These questions have been brought into greater importance through the teaching of Nietzsche. For the pith of Nietzsche's indictment of contemporary civilization is that by trickeries and deceits and false doctrines those favoured individuals who by their personal abilities and merits have the power, and therefore the only intelligible right, to claim as their heritage the good things of life, are cheated of this heritage. Hence Nietzsche's clamour against democracy; and hence, and most significantly, his unparalleled bitterness

against Christianity. For his conviction of the decadence of modern civilization, of its political formulæ and social tendencies, is the same as that which supplies Mr. Kidd with his only hope for human social progress, namely, the insight into the inevitable results of religion, and, specifically, of Christianity spreading an atmosphere in which individualistic self-assertion finds it hard to live, and quite impossible to maintain its ground. In other words, the tendency towards altruism, and towards the subordination of the selfish instincts, is not something inherent in the evolutionary process, or handed down from generation to generation as one of the most precious fruits of the education of the race (this latter view being seriously challenged by the biological doctrine, now largely dominant, of Weismann, as to the non-transmissibility of acquired characteristics); but is something which proceeds from the teaching of religion, and has no true sanction apart from that. The fact that man has reason and, under its influence, can act with his fellows in society—the two new forces which Mr. Kidd notes as differentiating man from the beasts—does not supply a motive for altruism rather than for selfishness, still less for society seeking the interests of the future rather than its own present ones. The weakness and uncertainty of the visions of the future formed by menders of society like Mr. G. B. Shaw and Mr. H. G. Wells lie in the inadequacy of the motives they supply. Mr. Shaw sees men and women who have ceased to believe in personal immortality, finding the same satisfaction which the belief in immortality gave, in the introduction of the supermen of the future, who alone can save and advance humanity. Mr. Wells sees the generations living, each one for the generations to come. But why should men and women

devote themselves to such self-sacrificing endeavour? Why should they think it worth while? Let it be granted, as, indeed, all who think at all deeply on the subject must admit, that a world from which all the altruistic sentiments had been wiped out would be utterly intolerable. It is still necessary to explain the presence of those sentiments, and the influence which they exercise over individuals. Christianity, with its doctrine of a loving God and of man made in God's image, gives an intelligible explanation of the presence and pressure of altruism; and, to put it quite moderately, nothing else explains the facts nearly as well.

The moral atmosphere in which we live, with, as it were, a continual bias against selfishness or special privileges and abilities as forces and endowments which can have any claim to control the progress of social evolution, is the creation of Christianity. We do not owe it to Greece. The Greek city-states were self-centred, unconscious of moral duties outside themselves, and perfectly contented with the contrast, within themselves, between the free citizens and the slaves, a contrast as marked in the "democracy" of Athens as in the aristocracy of Sparta. Rome in its republican days was pre-eminently a military state, and we neither expect nor find any moral sensitiveness with regard to humanity as a whole; while under the Empire, apart from the manifold debasement of morals and brutalizing of tastes, more conspicuous at the capital than in the provinces, the vast extent and ramifications of slavery, at once the prop and the peril of society, prevented such humanitarianism as Stoicism and some of the mystery-cults fostered from exercising much influence. But Christianity, with its doctrines of God, of man, of sin, and of a future life, introduced a new set of principles

and a new standard of values which were bound sooner or later (and the process is still going on) to break down many of the accepted conventions of pre-Christian society, and to fight a winning battle against that view of human society which identifies right with might. And whenever, in modern times, that view is in any way expressed, there you have a definite throw-back to non-Christian values. I do not mean for a moment that the doctrine Might is Right is not still constantly acted upon; this is due partly to the weakness or the evil from which human nature can never wholly free itself, partly to the difficulty which practice always has of coming up to the level of theory; but, at this point, Christianity can be finally and successfully challenged only by a counter-theory appealing to the whole of man, heart, will and intellect. And of such a theory there is not the very faintest trace.

So far nothing has been said of that other side of the picture on which the enemies of the Christian religion so confidently enlarge, while Christians often approach it with doubt and misgiving. It is alleged that every history of Christianity, every work purporting to give an account and render an estimate of the force exerted by this faith upon the course of civilization, must deal faithfully with the evils for which Christianity is held responsible as the agent and sponsor, and with the failures of omission, failure to protest against or, at least, powerfully to assail, manifest ills under which the world has suffered and still suffers. In bringing this section to an end I will, therefore, deal briefly with four charges of this kind: with the charge, firstly, that Christianity, when it had the power to do so, discouraged free inquiry and accordingly impeded the course of learning and knowledge; secondly, that

Christianity was responsible for persecutions, tortures and bloodshed which in horror rivalled the descriptions of the Inferno in Dante's great poem; thirdly, that Christianity in deliberate defiance of teaching given by its Founder and to be read in its sacred books, has allied itself with the great and powerful, and contributed to the subjection of the poor; and finally, that Christianity has made no serious effort to prevent war, and has failed to raise its adherents in their several countries above the level of a national patriotism which, regardless of moral truth, can always find some justification for even the most flagrant national wrongdoing.

Now the first charge obviously will not do at all, when it is made in any unrestricted form. The intellectual activity of the Middle Ages is a patent fact; hard thinking was a notable characteristic of that age of the world's history. What may truly be said of it is that it was thinking based on accepted first principles, and that the wide divergences which separated different philosophical and theological schools were never regarded as intentionally false to those principles. For us it is difficult to conceive of such a state of things; first principles are often the very last things which we dare to be certain of: nevertheless, even we are confident enough of certain principles to act upon them, and to visit with penalties those who, because of different principles, would act in a different way. Thus we punish those who attempt to take their own lives, thereby proving that we repudiate Schopenhauer's doctrine of the essential evil of existence. We prevent, if we can, any one from acting upon it, even though by so doing he should directly injure no one but himself (the only indirect injury he would do to society would be the slight spreading of an atmosphere a little more

favourable to the doubt as to the value of existence). Polygamy, which the Mormons reintroduced into Western religion, is not lawful in England, while in India we have gone so far as to suppress Thuggism and the suttee, thereby quite definitely imposing our own ideas of what is right upon people with quite other traditions than our own.

But, it may be said in reply, the restrictions which we make are in the interests of society and not of some abstract view of truth. This, however, makes no real difference of principle between modern and mediæval practice. Mediæval civilization was bound up with Christianity, and it was impossible for any one to envisage the state of society if the Christian basis was undermined. Sir Thomas More did indeed in his *Utopia* introduce religious toleration into his ideal society, but it is not very difficult for anyone to build up an ideal society which has no relation to things as they are and, in particular, to human nature as it is. For the men of the Middle Ages Christian doctrines were bedrock realities. They naturally disapproved of whatever seemed to them inconsistent therewith. But the idea that they were in a hurry to see in every advance in philosophy and natural science a danger to the purity of the faith does not square with the truth. Not only was very wide latitude allowed to thinkers like Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, though their metaphysics must have seemed almost subversive of first principles, but discoveries and advances in mathematics and mechanical science were made in the fourteenth century which were to be the forerunners of modern teaching. And in view of the number of European universities which were founded between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, often with the co-operation

of the State and the Church in the person of the Pope, it is impossible to imagine the later Middle Ages as a time when learning was at a discount.

If we come down to modern times, the idea of an essential clash between the Christian and the scientific does not become more probable when we consider how many of the greatest scientists have either been orthodox Christians, or have at least stood on the Christian side in opposition to a philosophy which would expel God from this world or relegate Him to the region of the unknowable. Among such we may count Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo (whose condemnation by the Roman Congregations is quite irrelevant to the main question), as Newton, Clerk-Maxwell, Faraday, Boyle, Lord Kelvin, Sir George Stokes—to name but a few, and those men of unquestionable scientific eminence. A lecture given in India by the Rev. G. T. Manley, entitled *Views of Modern Science*, since reprinted, puts the facts on this part of the subject very cogently. It is true that on the Continent the divergence would be much more obvious: but scientific "objectivity," in Germany at least, has too often meant an *à priori* repudiation of the supernatural, and a demand that those who approach the facts of science or of history should have already made up their minds to reject all evidence and interpretation which opens the door to a construction of reality in wider terms than those of naturalism. When in 1901 the great Mommsen protested against the appointment of a Catholic to a vacant chair of history at Strassburg University, on the ground that research must be "without presuppositions," and when in 1907 the learned Jesuit and biologist Wasmann was refused by his opponent Plate the title of scientist because of his Christian presuppositions, we see the

workings, not of the truly scientific mind, but of anti-Christian prejudices. Of course if it is assumed, or if the conclusion is come to, that Christianity is untrue, Christian handling of scientific and historical pieces of evidence must be most carefully scrutinized, and may not unfairly be distrusted in advance. But the major premiss of the whole argument is: "Christianity is untrue," and at that premiss a man may arrive on various grounds, some of them not in the least "scientific." In any case the demand for "no presuppositions" is unattainable, and few people have less right to talk at large on this subject than German investigators of the New Testament and of Christian doctrines, and their English followers.

Secondly, it is urged against Christianity that it has been responsible for appalling cruelties and a vast amount of bloodshed, for the sufferings of the Jews, for the persecutions of heretics in the Middle Ages, for the internecine wars of Catholics and Protestants, for the Inquisition and St. Bartholomew's Day, for the burning of supposed witches, and for a whole series of minor, yet exceedingly irksome, disabilities, especially when an established Church has been able to make use of the State for the enforcing of its own wishes.

This charge is truer than the last one. It is true that in the Middle Ages the Church felt it an incumbent duty, fully accordant with the genius of Christianity, to repress heresy and to hand over obstinate heretics to the secular arm for punishment. It is true that the Inquisition, especially in Spain, was responsible for an immense amount of suffering, inflicted under the supposition that it was pleasing to God. It is true that the Reformers were by no means prepared to repudiate the use of force against their theological opponents,

and that in England, under Elizabeth, Roman Catholic priests were cruelly put to death. It is true that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europe was drenched with blood as a result of the " religious " wars. It is true that religious toleration and the granting of full civil rights to those who did not profess the established faith of their several countries, to Jews and to unbelievers, was long in coming and was bitterly opposed. In a word, this charge, even when allowance is made for exaggerations by those anxious to paint Christianity as a whole, or some section of Christians, at its worst, is a serious one, and must be candidly and seriously dealt with.

First of all, it must be acknowledged, and I believe that all Christians to-day would acknowledge, that for many of the things that belong to their own past history there is no possible excuse ; that principles arguable in themselves were pushed to indefensible lengths ; that judicial forms were twisted to the detriment of justice itself, as when an accused person before the Inquisition could employ no pleader on his behalf ; that at times, what might have been viewed as righteous vengeance deteriorated into sheer cruelty, especially in connection with the Inquisition in Spain ; that the introduction of the use of torture to be applied, if necessary, in the examination of suspected heretics was utterly inconsistent with Christian precepts and precedents, and one of the worst of stains on the thirteenth century ; that the most prominent Reformers of the sixteenth century, while protesting against the customs of the Church of Rome in these matters, did not inaugurate or preach a new Gospel of mercy and toleration ; that in England in the seventeenth century Anglicans and Puritans showed themselves capable

of a shameful amount of bigotry and oppression—no honest Christian can deny that the annals of the past are sadly full of things done by Christians in ostensible support of Christianity, which, from no possible standard of judgment, be it of the twelfth or the sixteenth or the twentieth century, can find any excuse or justification whatever. The fact that men believed they were serving God, and following out the will of Christ, did not save them on occasions from—I will not say—measures of the most drastic sternness, but not even from gross outrages and cruelties.

But from this we must pass to the much more difficult question, whether the repressive measures of the Middle Ages and the religious wars that followed the Reformation were so undoubtedly wrong and condemnable in themselves, that the observer of these facts has a right to feel biassed by them against Christianity, and indeed to look on them as facts whose force no defence can parry. Again I must point out that we ought not to make our modern assumptions of the unimportance of intellectual error and the absolute right of speculative freedom the tests whereby to judge Christians of past ages. We have no very good ground for the former assumption, and as to the latter, however great be the advantages of complete speculative freedom, the disadvantages are not inconsiderable. It may be the case that, the world being as it is, we must risk the results of every kind of moral poison being freely on sale, results which we have no right whatever, save that of sheer unreasoning dogmatism, to limit to the present life; but I cannot think that it stands so much to reason as to need no further demonstration, that a generation, in which, for circumstances by no means of a wholly ethical kind, this freedom is granted,

is in a position to pronounce sentence on previous generations which believed that intellectual error did matter, that it was a peril not only to religion but to the foundations of society (some of the mediæval sects, such as the Cathari, went far to justify this belief), and that it was best to attack evil at its fountain head of wrong thought. Speculative error matters, not only because it is always undesirable that a man should be in error and not in the truth, but also because of the connection between error in thought and error in action. To condemn the Middle Ages on some large point of principle is by no means as easy as people suppose, who have not properly realized the whole difference in the context between mediæval and modern times. So great is the modern variety of beliefs, philosophies, assertions and negations, that the most that a modern State is able to do is to repress acts, and, very occasionally, words which appear, or can be represented as, seriously subversive of present social well-being. The mediæval State, for which religious certainty, not religious doubt and divergence, was the great intellectual fact, went much further.

The whole question of toleration is much more difficult than the assailants of the Christian record in this matter allow. Modern feeling, Christian and non-Christian alike, runs in other and wider grooves than those which limited sentiment and opinion five hundred years ago. Christians, as well as others, have learnt from the past, and have come to emphasize afresh those elements in the Gospel which are unfriendly to the use of force in matters of religion, and to distrust the logic which builds up a theory and policy of repression on the unquestionable sense of the seriousness of wrong belief which pervades the New Testament. But to allow

our present feelings to dictate our judgment of the past, to compound for sins that we in our modern civilization may be inclined to, by damning, with an indignation however real, those we have no mind to, is to reveal the spirit, not of the sober and intelligent critic and historian, but of the boisterous and undisciplined partisan.

The third charge against Christianity that I noticed was that of taking the side of the rich and powerful against the poor, and thereby placing itself in direct opposition to the teaching and spirit of its Founder. Now though one may fairly point out that this charge, as generally made, differs very widely from the contempt hurled at Christianity by Nietzsche because of its championship of the poor and oppressed, and its refusal to admit those claims which he makes on behalf of natural strength and ability, one must admit that it is not satisfactorily answered by the fact that an attack of quite a different and even opposite character has been made against the Christian religion. And Christians must allow that there have been times when the Church has by no means laid sufficiently to heart, or pressed upon the attention of men, the blessings pronounced by Christ upon the poor and the oppressed, and the warnings He uttered against the perils of wealth and success. Popes whose interests have lain in impressing the world by their grandeur, their culture, even their knowledge of the arts of war, rather than in showing themselves " servants of the servants of God " ; cardinals to whom statecraft has appealed more than piety ; courtier bishops and priests and divines who have used smooth words in the presence of flagrant wrongs—the Christian record is too full of such for us not to understand how great a stumbling-block has been thrown in the way of those who have looked not

only, or even chiefly, for a new heaven, but also for a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and have found no encouragement for their hopes in the Church of their times. Yet one may lay such stress on the unquestionable truth that there is in this attack, as to overlook a great amount of truth lying on the other side. People may hold different views of the value and expediency of monasticism, but it is certain that the monastic ideal, in which poverty formed one strand, was a strong and impressive protest against any tendency to suppose that the highest type of Christianity (for in the Middle Ages the life of the monk was universally regarded as the most Christian life possible) was comparable with the pursuit of wealth, luxury and worldly splendour as the great aim of human life. It is no answer to say that the monasteries themselves fell from their high ideals, and even fostered those very desires from which they professed to set men free. The luxury and corruption of monasteries, however great they may have been, if we accept even the estimate of unfriendly critics, were but a passing phase. The monastic ideal survives as a permanent testimony to the hold which the vision and inspiration of Christian poverty have taken upon men and women who have truly turned their backs on all other riches for the riches hidden in the poverty of Christ.

But besides this special witness against any identification of Christianity with power and success as the world counts them, there is nothing to which we can better apply our Lord's parable of the leaven than to this problem of the apparent inconsistency between the beliefs which Christians have professed and the beliefs on which they seem to have acted. Uneasiness with whatever appears to represent Christianity as the

ally or even the servant of the top-dog has been steadily working as a leaven, till to-day it is manifest in many different ways. There is always something which makes the Christian draw back from the framing of a distinctively Christian political programme; political and social questions are not indeed generally of the kind which can be solved by any rough-and-ready distinction of what is Christian from what is non-Christian: but more and more do Christians come to feel that the Gospel is not bankrupt where the problems of the building up of the nation are concerned. Evils such as sweating, housing-conditions which lead almost inevitably to intemperance and impurity, conditions of employment in mines and factories harmful alike to body and mind, commercial ambitions which may lead to savage competition at home, with its corollary—the weak to the wall—and to the demoralization of another nation abroad, as through the opium-traffic with China—such things as these are seen to be within the scope of the Mind of Christ. Granted that in past ages the Church has been too ready to content herself with promising to the down-trodden a heaven to compensate them for the ills of earth, there is every sign that now the Church hastens to learn and to fulfil her duty and, in an age of unparalleled complexity in respect of its political and economic conditions, to illuminate all things with the bright light of her Master's Spirit. And never without unfairness can be forgotten the work of the Church's priests and pastors in the towns and villages of our land and throughout the world. One has only to try to imagine what the absence of the parish clergyman in the lonely hamlet or town slum would mean, the loss to the poor of (often) their one friend and helper, one who does something to make

life a little easier, ready to stand beside them in difficulties and troubles, spending his time, his money and himself in their service—to realize that the strength of Christianity lies in ministries hidden from the glare of publicity, in a service of humanity easily overlooked, yet more than sufficient to outweigh all that can be said in disparagement of the Church's practical worth.

The fourth count against Christianity never weighed so heavily as at the present time. It is that Christianity has never really set itself against war, that, whatever professions condemnatory of war there may be in the New Testament and in Christian literature, Christians, with very few exceptions, have always and everywhere allowed national patriotism and nothing else to determine their attitude in the face of war, that in their hopes and prayers Christians have always been Englishmen or Frenchmen or Germans or Italians or Spaniards or Russians first, and Christians a long way behind; that in fact the whole idea of the One Holy Catholic Church, however interpreted, has broken down just at the point where it was most needed.

Now, this is not only a matter of external controversy between Christian and non-Christian, but of internal controversy between Christian and Christian. Whether war is ever a Christian duty, what conditions must be fulfilled to make a particular war a Christian duty, objectively considered, on the part of one of the combatants (it is obvious that, from an objective standpoint, war can never be a duty binding on both sides), how the Church which is supernational should in each different country encourage patriotism and yet deter from mere jingoism, foster national self-respect and abate national arrogance—these questions and others like them are most keenly probed among Christians

in this time of war. The conscientious oppositions between Christian and Christian in the answers given are, at least, proof that mere acquiescence in the frankly national, and sometimes carelessly non-moral position of those who are Christians in name only, even if in that, is not the mark of real Christianity to-day. Broadly speaking, the difficulty for the Christian arises from the fact that while he is conscious, not only of the essential horror and resulting evils of war, of the grossly unjustifiable character of many of the wars of which history is full, and of the frequency with which the two or more parties to any one war have differed only in respect of their varying degrees of guilt, but also of the constant danger of self-deception involved in every strong outburst of national feeling, yet he is not able (I speak of the enormous majority of Christians) to say dogmatically: "War is never lawful for the Christian: the Christian man may not take up arms even in self-defence." For any Christian who can make this assertion the problem as a problem ceases: he will no more take up arms than he will steal or commit adultery; though, even so, he sees that there is enough of a problem somewhere to make it impossible for him to condemn those who do the first act as assuredly as he condemns those who do the other two.

But even allowing for these divergences of opinion, a questioner may continue to ask: "Is not the Christian record a bad one in this business of war?" And that in two respects, first by creating no real public opinion against war; secondly, by actually causing wars, wars like the Crusades, and the post-Reformation wars between Catholics and Protestants. Now, I do not think it can be doubted that anything like a powerful anti-war sentiment in Christianity has been deplorably

absent from (at the latest) the third century of our era. That is not to say that the evils of war, and the necessity for an adequate justification of any particular war, have not been appreciated and expounded by Christian theologians; but one could hardly go further, and represent any age or country, since Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, as being seriously impressed with the moral problem of war. But we must remember this—the Church, as we have already seen, had to apply herself to the task of building up a new civilization after the Roman Empire fell and the barbarians swept down from the North of Europe; she had to deal with men and nations to whom war was as the breath of their nostrils; if force was ever legitimate (and the Church did not deny that in various circumstances it was not only legitimate but necessary) it could not be more rightly used than in bringing order out of chaos during the centuries which followed the fifth; and as to war, the Church could not (for it was not her belief) proclaim that it was either essentially and always a moral evil, or productive of evil alone. Of war, more than of most things, it is true that:

> "Whate'er thou deem'st on earth
> Most evil, scan it well,
> A buried seed of worth
> Doth surely in it dwell."

War, with all its evils, has been an instrument, terrible and clumsy, and yet neither wholly fruitless nor simply ignoble, in human and moral progress. We have only to think of some of the great wars and battles of the world during the last 1900 years to realize the truth of this statement. Civilization, both what remained of the old classical type, and that of early Gothic Christianity which was in its infancy, was saved for Europe

when at Chalons, in 451, Attila and his Huns reeled back before Roman soldiers and the warriors of Theodoric. If Christianity has no responsibility for the character of the present world and of its civilization, then at Chalons, and at Tours nearly three hundred years later, Christians might have stood aside, indifferent whether the laws of Europe were to be framed, and its institutions moulded, under the control and guidance of Christian or Hun or Mahometan. But Christianity is not committed by its principles to think of the next world as its only interest. Its business is not simply to prepare men for a heaven where there is no evil, but to exhort and educate them to go forward to the overthrow of evil on earth, where evil is strongly entrenched and ready again and again to take the offensive. Thus it will follow that the rise and fall of nations, the present nature and future possibilities of this or that claimant to power and dominion, cannot but fall within the field of its interests and summon it to put forth its energies.

The answer of the pacificist is that among those energies must never be included the business of war; the Christian's armoury is a spiritual one alone; the material sword has no place among its weapons; war, some would add, is but the evoking of Satan to cast out Satan, and the servant of God must never call in Satan to work God's purposes. The whole Christian spirit and tenor of the Gospel (for to this, and rightly, appeal is made by modern opponents of war on any account and at all costs, whether they themselves be Christians or not, rather than to this or that text) is utterly opposed to decisions arrived at through force, to ordeal by battle. Some, like Tolstoy, would extend this thought so far as to deny the rightfulness of such

institutions as courts of law and the police, which borrow their strength and authority from the force at their disposal through the support of the State ; the logic of this position, pushed yet further, does away with the whole idea of the State itself. But those who do not go to such lengths argue, and not without justification, that war as an example of the supremacy of force, stands by itself. The judge punishes the wrongdoer in virtue of the law which stands above both of them. The law is settled, though by the will of the citizens it may be changed ; to break it is an unsocial act. But war is the effort of one nation to impose not a higher law, but its own will, upon another by the force which seeks and admits no justification for its own exercise, except in so far as moral excuses are necessary to the quieting of disturbed consciences. It is the way neither of law, nor of love ; it involves untold agonies, and the colossal destruction of individually guiltless persons ; it turns men into machines whose first purpose—for so only can the ultimate object, the supremacy of one's nation's will over another be attained—is to deprive their fellow men of God's gift of life ; it contains no single guarantee for the triumph of the more righteous, but only of the stronger party ; it is, in fact, an utterly non-moral solution of what is, because it involves a clash of wills, an essentially moral problem.

I think it is possible to accept a very great deal, almost the whole, of such an indictment, and yet to remain convinced that war is always a possibility, and may become a duty, for the Christian man and the Christian nation. For the whole question of war comes to a focus, not in the killing and the suffering, which, however prolonged and gigantic and purposeful, is, nevertheless, and speaking quite strictly, incidental,

nor in the fact that from a merely human point of view victory will go to the stronger and not to the more righteous combatant, but in the motives behind the initial clash of wills, and the struggle resulting from it. That a Christian may never make another human being suffer, whether through death or through some lesser form of penalty, is a proposition which is quite untenable in the face of the New Testament. That Christ inflicted mental suffering upon the Pharisees by His scorching words, and intended to do so, is patent to anyone who will read the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. That St. Peter, through the power of the Holy Spirit, inflicted, and intended to inflict, the physical penalty of death upon Ananias, and yet more clearly upon Sapphira, is the perfectly plain meaning of the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, while in the thirteenth chapter of that book St. Paul, "filled with the Holy Ghost," deliberately calls down upon Elymas the sorcerer the punishment of blindness. How persuasively Sapphira, or, still more, Elymas, might have argued that these were nothing but non-moral solutions of moral questions, that the fact that Peter and Paul had superior force at command proved nothing at all as to the merits of the cases, as to whether they were right to exercise that force, that the Apostles were not acting in accordance with law, still less in accordance with love.

For the understanding of such cases, and of our Lord's treatment of the Pharisees, it is necessary to bring in another idea. And that is the idea of the part to be played by men in the establishment of righteousness upon earth. It is impossible to control the idea of righteousness by the idea of love in such a way that the infliction of suffering becomes morally wrong as

being incompatible with love. It is impossible to control the idea of righteousness by the idea of law in such a way that righteousness cannot be enforced or vindicated in cases where there is no positive law to bind the will. A will, impelled by the desire for the establishment of righteousness, may involve actions which necessarily bring with them great suffering; it may be met and overcome in the material sphere by greater material force; the person whose will is directed to this great end may feel that the particular manifestation of the end which he desires is not sufficiently important to justify all the incidents which must occur before that manifestation becomes possible—a statesman may draw back from pressing some wholesome and remedial measure, which he has the power to carry, because of the greatness of the price which must be paid. But what is possible is that the cause of the divine righteousness, which can be manifested through the liberties, the politics and the institutions of man, should become so all-important, so clearly and decisively bound up with a particular issue, that that issue must be unsparingly pressed at the cost of whatever suffering. I should not like to say that a nation has ever gone consciously and deliberately to war in order to establish the divine righteousness, but nations have certainly gone to war for moral and not for material reasons, and in so far as their moral outlook was a true one, and the cause for which they fought could not be sustained and vindicated except by force of arms, their efforts were rightly directed to the triumph of righteousness. Such was the case in Jeanne d'Arc's successful campaigns against England, in the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in the Dutch resistance to Spain, and, as I believe, in the Belgian resistance to Germany, and

England's entry into the present war. That in every war which may be regarded as a righteous exercise of the will of one of the parties, both in those mentioned and in others, powerful secondary causes have also been at work I should not for a moment deny; but it is a shallow cynicism which would argue that a war became unrighteous because expediency as well as nobler interests dictate war rather than peace.

How far the Christian rule of love can obtain between nation and nation is a question not easy to answer. That our Lord's teaching and the Christian spirit is for nations as well as for individuals is a true position to adopt. Yet there must be a difference between a nation and an individual. A Christian nation will contain numbers who are Christians only in name, if in that; while love, though not a mere sentiment of affection, is something so personal that it is not clear how it can be attributed to a nation as well as to an individual. Nevertheless, the ties binding nations to one another do occasionally, and for a time, become so close and so strongly based on deep mutual respect that it is not wholly meaningless to speak of love in such a connection. Moreover, the apparent contrast between war and the law of love is in reality greatly lessened by the very fact which is apt to shock—that men kill one another without, in the majority of cases, any feeling whatever of personal bitterness and hatred.

It is, of course, true that in a perfect Christendom there would be no war, since the causes from which wars spring—causes which always involve on one side, and may involve on both sides, a morally vitiated outlook—would disappear. But to isolate war from other evils, which is really what is done when a war

like the present is treated as the proof of Christian apostasy, or of the bankruptcy of Christian faith, is a serious mistake; while the powerful description of the manifold miseries of war, and the deduction from such a picture that war is always wrong, comes perilously near to a sentimentality divorced alike from true reason and from true moral judgment. War as a physical fact is a very awful phenomenon, like a great earthquake or fire; war as a moral fact is one of the most appalling proofs of human wickedness, since apart from such wickedness, even where stupidity very largely enters in, there would be no war. But that is not all: war as a moral fact may also be one of the greatest proofs of the devotion of man to ideals of righteousness, to ideals which set at defiance thoughts of comfort and luxury and material calculations, and can rise to the heights of a championship of the cause of the weak and the oppressed. The question to which we seek an answer should not be put in such a form as: "Is war wrong?" or: "Is war compatible with Christianity?" for such forms lack complete clearness, so that the answers are only too likely to be inadequate. What we must ask is: "Is it ever right for a Christian nation to go to war?" and to that question we may, without treachery to our first principles, return an affirmative answer. It should be our hope and prayer that Christian people will become better and more instructed Christians, and that those sins of temper and desire, of suspicion and bad faith, which lie behind wars may give place to different national attitudes, and that when disputes between nations do occur, some other method of handling the matter than the arbitrament of war may be ready. We should be penitent for the too easy and contented way in which Christians in the past have regarded war,

for the very imperfect application of the Christian spirit to national and international, as compared with personal, issues. But we need not be ashamed of or apologetic over the fact that the Christian Church has never taught—whatever individuals may have said—that under no circumstances may a Christian nation go to war, or a Christian man take part in that terrible reality.

I should like to refer here to a recent book of Mr. William Temple (*Church and Nation*: Macmillan & Co., 2s. 6d.), and to call attention to a fact which he very rightly emphasizes, a fact which certainly needs correcting. It is that the sentiment of nationality, that intense love of country which has counted for so much in the history of the world, has never really been Christianized, or baptised into Christianity. While we shall allow for the great difficulties which have always confronted the Christian Church at this point, since few things are harder to control or to guide rightly than intense national feeling, we must also confess that the Church has not fulfilled her duty in the past, and that the matter does not grow less urgent. Christianity is not the friend of cosmopolitanism as opposed to nationalism: in the great vision towards the end of the book of the Revelation the kings of the earth are seen to bring their treasures to adorn the Holy City, and it is natural to suppose that these treasures vary according to the distinctive character and the genius of the various nations. But the influence of Christianity upon the national spirit ought to act as a check upon the exaggeration and perversion of that spirit, which we used to speak of as jingoism, which expresses itself in such words as, "My country, right or wrong," and may lead to the most harmful and evil indifference to the righteousness

of a nation's cause. The time has come for the Christian conscience to apply itself more seriously to this problem, to instruct itself that it may be able to teach others.

CHAPTER III

Christianity and the Arts

We may now turn to another side of this great subject. I propose to say something of the influence of Christianity upon the æsthetic side of life. This is too much neglected, or its importance is not appreciated. Yet the beautiful forms one of a triad, along with the true and the good. Nor is it a mere adornment of life. Beauty contains a revelation. There is a wonderful passage in the *Symposium* of Plato, in which Socrates describes a conversation which he once had with a wise woman, who instructs him in "the science of beauty." The beautiful things of earth do not simply seem beautiful to man, but they are the reflexion of an absolute and divine beauty, and man should use the beautiful things of earth "as steps along which he mounts upward for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair actions, and from fair actions to fair notions, until from the fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is." Great indeed is the happiness which comes through this æsthetic side of life: incomparably poorer would be a humanity that had no eye for the beautiful; incomparably poorer, too, would humanity be apart from the

contributions to this side of life made under the inspiration of the Gospel.

Now it is probably true that a great many people do not look upon Christianity and art as in any sense related to one another, much less as friends or allies. On the contrary, it is supposed that there is something of the nature of at least veiled hostility between the two, that Christianity is inclined to condemn art as lawless, or at any rate a law to itself, and lacking in reverence for religion, if not actually unspiritual or even wanton ; and that art in its turn will dislike and despise what it may consider the narrowness, the laying down of restrictions, the prudishness which appear to spring from the profession of Christianity ; that to Christianity art will seem wholly wrapt up in the things of this world, things which appeal to man's senses rather than to his spirit, while art will see in Christianity a faith which sacrifices all the certain present charm and beauty of the world to the uncertain hostility of another, which is more ready to shrink from outward material beauty than to grasp it with both hands. It would be false to say that there was nothing in all this but a profound misunderstanding. History does show very wide separations between art and Christianity at certain periods. The Fathers of the Church in the early centuries were more alive to the falseness and the frequent impurity of the religion represented in the great poetic works of the Greek and Roman writers than to the beauty of the poems and the grand ideals which often inspired the poets. The Puritan attitude to art was not all that we have been accustomed to suppose (Milton and Bunyan were at once great Puritans and great artists), but Puritanism was suspicious, and was also responsible for the destruction of a great deal of material beauty

which, whatever might be thought of the religious uses to which it had been put, was very precious artistically. The attitude of Christians, Catholics as well as Puritans, towards the dramatic art and its exponents has, at times, been savagely hostile. And even to-day one could easily find Christian people who looked on the artistic temperament as something hardly compatible with true and deep religion. Nor have the representatives of art failed to give occasion for such ideas ; during the great fifteenth and sixteenth century movement in Europe which we call the Renaissance, in the seventeenth century in England after the Restoration of Charles II, among those who in later times have espoused the creed of what is known as " art for art's sake," there has been a carelessness of religion and a disregard of morality, a flagrant licence and indecency in the selection and treatment of certain subjects, which has inevitably revolted the Christian conscience and played into the hands of those for whom between religion and art there must always be a great gulf fixed.

Yet despite all this, to regard Christianity and art as enemies is both ideally and historically false. And not only so, but no religion, no spiritual outlook upon the world, has rendered to art such services as Christianity has done.

Let us look at this a little more closely. In great art there are these two elements—the expression of the artist's spirit, and the interpretation by the artist of things outside himself into which his spirit penetrates, so that he may extract from them all the meaning of which they are capable. Self-expression is not the one aim of the artist ; it is something far greater than himself which he tries to express in architecture or painting, in poetry or music. He is concerned not so much

with outward appearances as with all that lies behind them. A great portrait differs from a photograph, however perfect, because the artist is able to transmit to his canvas not only the features but the very spirit of the man in a way that no machine can do. In music again, the most inward and subjective of all the arts, the great composer is also the great interpreter or even prophet; that is, his message is more than the musical utterance of his own individual inspiration. If he is the inspired revealer of beauties or mysteries which few can express among those who perceive them, it is because revelation has first come to him. If we put it in religious language we should say that a word of the Lord had come to him. And, further, the word of the Lord which comes to him is a word of moral power. It is not the function of art to teach morals, but great art is profoundly ethical; here, too, great art has the prophetic ring. Thus art, which to the casual or unfriendly onlooker is so largely taken up with the things of sense and the world as it is, and relies on the appeal to eye or ear, is, in fact, continually beating at the barriers of this world, to force it to give up the secrets which lie beneath the surface of its outward show. Whether an universally accepted mechanical or naturalistic explanation of the world would be the ruin of great art is beyond our powers to say, but that it would most severely restrict it, and confine it within far narrower limits than its genius demands, is so probable as to be practically certain If ultimate truth made such a claim, art would have to bow before it, but we need not blind ourselves to the greatness of the loss. Materialism would explain all things, including the human spirit, in terms of matter and force; it would look on every sort of human activity as the necessary effect

of causes purely physical; for any free action of the spirit it leaves no place at all. Idealism, mystery and hope are all cut short in its presence. Not into mystery but into nothingness do all things vanish. Let us not think that the danger from materialism has departed, because in recent years it has, as a philosophy, found it more and more difficult to hold its ground. Materialism, in some form or other, will always be the creed of the multitudes, when they have lost grip of the great beliefs in God, Freedom and Immortality. And in the struggle between Christianity and Materialism, art is not an unconcerned spectator. The kind of world, the outlook upon existence which art desires, and which is necessary for its finest inspiration and achievement, is bound up with the Christian interpretation. The beauty of which art is both student and expositor is not simply the beauty of line, colour and sound, but the beauty which is through these made visible but not created. And if Christianity has had less to say of the beautiful than of the good and the true, that has been due to a combination of many causes, its Hebraic inheritance, its concern with man as he exists, and the nature of its Gospel which, in relation to man, is directly ethical and not æsthetic; whereas for the artist the æsthetic element is the proper channel for the ethical. But even the Hebrew was not neglectful of the idea of beauty in respect of God, and in the New Testament, as the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Book of Revelation make plain, that idea is extended to the Church, God's new creation, viewed in that perfection which is its consummation.

In so far, then, as any estrangement between Christianity and art has not been due to narrowness or lack of vision on the Christian side, or to failure to live up

to its own highest inspiration on the side of art, it must be attributed, not to incompatibility of spirit, nor to contrariety of aim (the aims are different but not contrary), but to misunderstanding and to needless suspicion, and consequent lack of intimacy between the two.

But, historically, the closeness of the relations existing between Christianity and art is really far more striking than whatever of opposition has now and then appeared. Each has rendered the other most real services. Under the magic touch of the great artists, the painters, the architects, the poets and the musicians, the beauty which runs through Christianity, though not on its surface, has been brought to the light, so that men have come to see that the great Christian doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Resurrection are æsthetically as well as morally moving. And Christianity has provided the artist, not only with material of unparalleled richness upon which he may work, but with an inspiration capable of drawing out his finest powers. From the Gospel the artist has gained a vision in the light of which the world can be beautified as well as strengthened, and that redemption of which it tells leaves no faculty of man outside its quickening power.

Two facts of history make the debt of art to Christianity the more remarkable. The first is that art owes nothing, except on the side of poetry and perhaps (though we really know nothing of it) to some extent of music, to Christianity's religious predecessor Judaism. The second is that art owed so much to pagan Greece in sculpture, architecture and poetry, and reached such perfection in Greece, that it is not easy to think of it as more deeply in the debt of a religion which had its origin in Palestine, than of one which stimulated the imagination of the

most naturally gifted race, where art is concerned, that the world has ever seen. But it is pointed out by Dr. Forsyth in his illuminating book, *Christ on Parnassus*, that Greek art gave more to Greek religion than it received from it: in the great sculptured art of Pheidias, and by the poetic genius of Sophocles, the old crude, and even immoral, stories about the gods were purified. The religious ideal was not present for them; they had to make it. With Christianity the matter stands quite differently. One does not feel, in looking at Raphael's famous picture of the Madonna and Child, or Perugino's Crucifixion, or in listening to Handel's *Messiah*, that the artist is reading into Christianity something which is not there, re-forming the Christian ideal according to his own inspiration. On the contrary, he is trying to express what is of the very essence of Christianity. There is no hindrance to the exercise of his imagination; he is not precluded from the use of whatever symbolism may seem to him satisfactory for the interpretation that he is making of some historical or doctrinal truth; but by that truth he is controlled; an authority stands over him in a way that was not possible in the case of the Greek artist. But that authority does not cramp him; there is room and to spare for him to work within its limits, since the grandeur of the truth which claims to be the authority is too great for any individual to take in and exhaust. The promise of truth to the artist as much as to any man is that it will not enslave him but make him free. And the acceptance of the Christian Gospel, as the truth about God and man, has acted as a liberating force in making possible for the artist work which could not proceed from his own soul except as an answer to a revelation made first for the world. The greatness of what is wrought

under the conviction of revealed truth is not a proof that the worker's soul is possessed by truth and not by error: the crude idea that a thing is true because in practice it works, is really an abandonment of what is most precious in the idea of truth. But, for all that, attacks on Christianity in respect of its practical utility, and disparaging comparisons made between its supposed gloom and moroseness and tendency to sterilize human powers and darken human life, and the blitheness and gaiety and beautifying capacity of Greek genius, may fairly be met by a consideration of what Christianity, which makes no positive pretensions for itself, in the matter of art, has in fact done for the artistic enrichment of the world.

The effects of its inspiration have been immense. There is no single branch of art, except sculpture, which has not, at the touch of that inspiration, developed to a point higher than anything previously known. In architecture the Greek temple stands, as we may say in metaphor, four square; it is perfect of its kind; it may even be granted that there is a technical perfection about it greater than anything which Christianity can show. Yet its beauty is no greater than the beauty of the Gothic architecture which is Christianity's special gift to the world, while in meaning and mystery, and in all that gives to a work of stone power over the human spirit, it is markedly inferior. There is nothing to suggest that their temples meant a great deal to the Greeks; they were shrines for the god rather than homes for the god's worshippers. But the Christian cathedral or church has been both a thing of beauty, and a home, almost homely. It has been equal to all the moods of man's restless spirit. It lifts itself to heaven in a lofty aspiration which can rouse to great

endeavours; its dignity awes but does not crush the soul; there is joy in its exquisite lightness and finish, and peace in the strong repose of the high arches. Always there is the suggestion of something more than that which the eye beholds; from no one angle can the whole glory of the building be perceived. The eyes, like the feet, must travel slowly along the nave and chancel before the altar is reached. Mystery goes hand-in-hand with revelation. And, along with these, there is the simplicity which comes through the predominance of a single idea, and which is, therefore, not incompatible with detailed richness of expression and ornament, however highly elaborated. That idea is the idea of the Cross: the form of the Cross, though it was not the only type and ground plan, became far the most important one in Gothic architecture. When we think of the mechanical disadvantages, as compared with our own times, under which the mediæval builders had to labour, when we remember that these men, whose names are often unknown to us, were in the truest sense creators (for the earlier type of Christian church, known as the Basilican, had to be radically changed before Gothic could develop), and that their creations must have surpassed their grandest hopes, when we remember also that they worked in loyalty to Christian ideas and to Christian needs of worship, we must recognize and wonder at (if we can do no more) the vastness of the impetus which made such men and their works possible, the nobility of the spirit that raised up and drove forward these creators, which brooded over the growth of their creations, and lives in them still.

The triumph of Christianity in art, the inspiration, the soul, which it was able to supply, without which art can never rise above the attainment of a merely

mechanical perfection, is yet more marked in the subtler sphere of painting. In ancient Greece, painting seems neither to have inspired the interest nor to have reached the heights of excellence found in Greek sculpture and architecture. Perhaps it was the very subtlety of this art which led to its comparative neglect. For though the Greek mind was capable of the most subtle reasoning, its outlook upon the world was direct. Exactness and regularity of form, which can be immediately visualized, appealed to it more than the richness and suggestiveness of colour. When we speak of the classical type of beauty, which is the Greek type of beauty, we think of straightness of line and harmony of proportion rather than of beauty of eye or complexion. Accordingly Greek art, with all its perfection, lacked the note of variety, of unexpectedness, which can pass into a sort of riotousness. This note burst forth in Christian painting. Not at first indeed; the paintings of the catacombs are simple enough, and Byzantine art fell away into conventionality and remoteness from life. It was in mediæval Italian art, of which one of the first great names is Giotto, about 1,300, that all the possibilities of the Christian inspiration of painting were revealed, with its fresh revelation of feeling, individuality and deep religious devotion. And when we think of such names as Fra Angelico, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo, we ought to remember that what such men wished to express, what released their powers, and what is responsible for the permanent and living joy they have given to the world, was their sense of the uniqueness and authority of Christ, of the difference He had made, of the reality and proximity of the spiritual world. It is for the art-critic to explain the technique of their great pictures,

to tell us what to look for in detail, and how to appreciate the arrangement of the figures and the relation of background and foreground; but everyone can realize the fact of the interpenetration of this art with ideas which are not on the circumference, but at the centre, of the Christian religion. And not the least remarkable feature of this art is its sincerity, the sense of reality conveyed from the painter to the spectator, of a preoccupation with what is not a mere projection from the human heart, but a response by man to a divine revelation once given and able to be presented in many forms. "By divers portions and in divers manners" did God of old time speak unto the fathers in the prophets (Hebrews i. 1, R.V.) The word of God was then a spoken word, but that was only one method of its declaration. The doctrine of the Incarnation, of God's self-expression in man, made possible yet one more way in which God's voice could be heard. And there are many to-day (would that the Church took more account of them! She is not wholly true to her own past heritage) who can hear God's word in such an art as painting as they never could hear it in any sermon, however eloquent. And if we lament the lack of really great painting in our modern times, may it not be that there is more connection between the finest work in this art and the inspiration of historic, as opposed to watered-down Christianity, than we at first suspect? What with the Christians who distrust all art, and especially an art in which the element of visible beauty, appealing at once to the senses, is as prominent as it necessarily is in painting; and with those artists, or rather, their camp-followers, who distrust a positive religion for its supposed fettering, in the interests of a bourgeois morality, of the free sweep of

artistic genius, we are in danger of assuming the presence of inevitable mutual hostility, and forgetting the facts of one of the most intimate of friendships. Something of a return to that historic friendship was promised in the pre-Raphaelite revival of last century. The future may restore it to us on a grander scale.

Of music and the drama there is less to be said. Each has, indeed, its connections with Christianity. The miracle-play of the Middle Ages was a religious act, in the sphere of religious worship, broadly interpreted, just as the drama of ancient Greece had the closest associations with Greek belief and ritual. And some of the great glories of music, such as Bach's *Mass*, were composed to give the illumination of sound to the faith of Christendom. But neither the drama nor music has ever been Christian in the way that architecture and painting have been. Music, in particular, conveys impressions rather than actual teaching, and the hearer must interpret as best he can. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that forms of Christianity which have made no place for the utilization of the other arts in connexion with worship, banning sculpture and painting, and neglecting the symbolism of Gothic architecture, have yet felt the suitability of music, both vocal and instrumental (though the Puritans disapproved of organs), for the expression of Christian truth. For though music can be as sensuous as any other art, perhaps more than any, it is essentially spiritual, not bound down or circumscribed by any material form. It is neither made nor destroyed as a cathedral or picture can be. And so those who distrust the intrusion of material things into Christian worship have been able to make a place for music. We can at least say that this points to a natural affinity between that spiritual

interpretation of existence for which Christianity stands, and the essential quality of music.

And with music goes poetry. Here again there are no inner differences among Christians. The religious possibilities of poetry are obvious when we remember that parts of the Bible to which we naturally and readily attach the idea of inspiration, have the essential form and genius of poetry. This is indeed most obvious in the Old Testament, in the Psalms and some of the prophets, such as the last portion of the Book of Isaiah ; but in the New Testament there is St. Paul's great poem in praise of love, in 1 Corinthians xiii., and the poetic quality of the words of Christ Himself has been recognised when other strains, the dogmatic in particular, in His teaching have been overlooked. And there are those who appreciate religion as it comes to them through the medium of poetry more than in any other way. For poetry teaches by the revelation which it brings ; and this is fundamentally the method of Christ. The great tragic poets of ancient Greece so interpreted the current legends about the gods as to illuminate the ways of God with man (even when they left much obscure). So it is with great Christian poets like Dante and Browning. Christianity presented them with material which they could use both in their interpretations of things as they are, and in their visions of things as they may become. And for the latter purpose the assurance given in religion is essential. Scientific materialism and poetry are not reconcilable, for to materialism the world is a flat surface on which all persons and things (and for it the " persons " are finally no more than " things ") move forward along inexorable lines to pass away into the eternal silence of total lifelessness. There are no higher planes. The visions and

imaginings of the poets become futile, because out of touch with what is real. Poetry sinks to the level of mere ornament, and the art of the poet has no value except to give pleasure.

But the great poets have never been content with a conception of their art which reduces it to mere embroidery upon life. They have been prophets, and not workmen skilled in presenting common facts beautifully. Their claim, whether spoken or not, has not been simply to present the impressions which men may derive from the material world in an especially lovely way, nor even to expound the actual loveliness of the world in such a way that all may feel and appreciate the beauty of the "primrose by the river's brim"; still less to bring an unreal, non-existent world of their own imagination to relieve the pressure of actual earthly existence: but to find the ultimate meaning of beauty, to elicit the real but higher world, not immediately accessible to the senses, which yet lies behind sense-impressions. Matthew Arnold, in the preface to his edition of Wordsworth's poems, repeating words he had used of Homer, says that "the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness"; and such ideas are, as he goes on to say, pre-eminently moral, which fits in with what he asserts elsewhere as to morality being three parts of life. But if this be so, the connection between poetry and religion, especially a religion of the profound moral character of Christianity, is clear. "Poetry," to quote Matthew Arnold again, "is at bottom a criticism of life." But this, if the word criticism be given its full force as implying decision and judgment, is also the nature of religion. Religion is at once interpretation and discrimination. "Why of yourselves do you not

form the right judgment ? " was one of Christ's questions. But what possibility of a right judgment, except in the most limited sense of the words, can there be in a mechanical world, in which the last word is the law of matter and of motion ? Ideas and life alike become mere passing manifestations thrown upon the surface of things, possessed of no controlling powers or final value, no better, indeed, ultimately, than waste-products. And if among such waste-products providing, at best, the joy of an hour, religion must be numbered, how shall poetry and all the arts escape ?

In the arts, in different degrees according to the character of each, there is the union of outward and inward, matter and spirit, form and content. The external manifestation, while it veils, also points to the reality lying behind. The materialist will deny that any such reality exists ; art, like every thing else, must be subject to the laws of physics and chemistry, beside which there are, for him, no laws. But for the artist to adopt such a position would mean the turning of the back upon just that which has gone to make great art in the past, and a deliberate contentment with a far lower vocation for art, if the word vocation could be used at all. And if the artist still claims that in his art matter and spirit come together in a real unity, this is what the Christian claims for his religion. He points to the Incarnation, to the Resurrection, to the Sacraments, as presenting this union. Neither Christianity nor art makes little of the material side of life, but each sees in this material side a spiritual meaning. " Spirit is the meaning of body : body is the method of spirit," said a great theologian, the late Dr. Moberly of Oxford, of the Christian view of the relations of matter and spirit. The birth of Christ, the death of Christ, the

sacraments of Baptism and of Holy Communion, are incidents in the material world, and, as such, have their material side. But the Christian believes that they have an under-side, a spiritual side, which does not abolish the material but explains it, and is in the closest union with it. In so far as suspicion has arisen, separating Christianity and art from one another, it is certainly not in virtue of a radical unlikeness, estranging their underlying principles. The historical connection in the past, of which something has been said, was a true reflection of a similar outlook, of an insight into things common to the two. The debt of each to the other has been too great and too fruitful for any acquiescence in the idea that between the Christian and the artist a great gulf is fixed.

CHAPTER IV

The Christian Character

There is one further aspect of Christian influence and Christian achievement on which a word must be said before this little book is brought to a close. It is the side on which Christianity appears as a force, moulding individual character. If of this nothing great could be said, if there were no such thing as the "Christian character," inspiring wonder and evoking admiration, then we should have to confess that, whatever achievements might be laid to the credit of Christianity in other spheres, they would fall far short of the power to convince men that it was indeed of God. The final argument is not what men say, not even what they do, but what they are. And the final argument for Christianity must be the lives of Christians Nor is this argument disproved by the existence of bad and slack Christians, of professing Christians whose Christianity is put off as easily as an overcoat, and, as far as can be seen, is much less useful to them, of times when the average of Christian conduct and character has been low, of patent faults staining even those who are in earnest with their Christianity, of evil things done in the name of Christ, and good things, which His name should have inspired, left undone. Despite all this, the witness of the Christian character remains. There is an old

Latin saying, *corruptio optimi pessima*, that is, "the worst corruption is the corruption of the best." For those who believe that Christianity is the best of all things there is no surprise in the fact that of all corruptions the corruption of Christianity is the worst. The very fact that the moral failure of Christians, the selfishness of Christians, the unbridled tongues of Christians, the meanness and pettiness of Christians, shock men so much is a testimony both to the excellence of Christianity, and to the belief that Christians ought to, and therefore can, "walk worthy of the calling with which they are called."

And the Christian character appeals not simply as ideal but as fact, as a moral creation which can be perceived and valued. It is not only that a new creation does take place in cases of what we specifically call conversion, but that a beauty and power of life are visible among Christians who have never undergone any sudden change from evil to good. And the Christian character is not something which, so to speak, hangs in the air, independent of beliefs and hopes. Love, which is its greatest word and fullest meaning, is a member of a triad, of which the other two are faith and hope. We are learning, and shall learn more fully, that Christian moral commandments cannot be separated from Christian doctrine; so it is with the Christian character which is the living-out of those commandments, and of the spirit which breathes through them.

That character appeals and has power through the harmony of its different elements. Gentleness and courage, activity and patient endurance, intolerance of evil and compassion, with boundless hope for the evil-doer, unselfishness without poverty of personal spirit, interest in life without dependence upon its

changes and chances—the fusion of these and other qualities in men and women of very different natural capacities, in every kind of station in life, shows forth Christ, and the difference which Christ makes to the world.

The future of the world will be according to the character of those who live in it. No machinery can solve the evils from which we suffer, though it may do something to check their worst results. Not in the excellence of machinery, but in the possibilities of character, does the solution lie. It is not because he has found something better than Christianity in the field of character that the average man does not look to it, but partly through lack of attention, partly through a cynicism or unbelief, which, resting on the basis of his own true realization of the inadequacy of his own natural powers, cannot rise to the thought of a force able to turn his, and the world's, weakness into strength. Behind character, and, indeed, as the soil in which it can grow, there must be a motive and a power. Faith in God, and in God's revelation of Himself in Christ, is both.

"I came not to call the righteous but sinners," said our Lord. He called sinners to Himself that they might unlearn their sinfulness. That call echoes on in the Church. The Church calls men to find in her, in the fellowship of believers, Him Who can make them new. For she knows that those who find Him, find the secret of character, that secret which has provision both for the past and the future, for the past in forgiveness, for the future in fresh strength. The idea of forgiveness, like every great religious idea, can be abused and corrupted; but where the full meaning of forgiveness is present, where the experience of it answers the deep desire for a new moral personality, for a settling

with and breaking off from the past—the psalmist's desire for a clean heart—there we are very near to the springs of character, to the healing waters of goodness, which can be released to rush forth, bearing new life to the land through which they flowed.

We may neglect or misunderstand the past. We may be uninterested in the forces which have moulded our civilization. We may have neither eye nor ear for the appeal of the arts. Religion as a diffused spirit, or as an explanation of the world, may pass us by. But in men and women, and what they do and what they are, we are interested, nor can we escape the influence they exert. And so long as the society of the believers in Christ remains (and we Christians can put no end to its existence), so long as there are men and women who display the treasures of the Christian character, and show what it means to take Christ as Lord and Guide and End, so long will there be ever new achievements of the Christianity which is Christ—and to the world an everlasting appeal.

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